## **INDIANA'S CONSERVATION SHOWCASE**

Helping People...

...Help the Land





## **Drought Relief in Orange County Indiana**



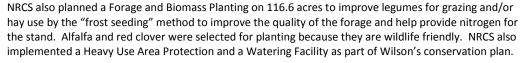
During the historic drought of 2012, landowners in Southern Indiana endured one of the hottest and driest periods ever recorded in history. With the crops and pastures withering and the livestock and wildlife showing signs of heat stress, one Orange County farmer saw a potential light at the end of the tunnel.

Loran B. Wilson of Orleans, Indiana learned of the potential technical and financial assistance which the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) could provide through the Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program (WHIP). Wilson is a cattle, forage and crop producer and he has participated in years past in NRCS's Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP). Because of this, he knew how the cool, clean water his cows were drinking from the watering facility along with fencing installed, created a more comfortable environment for any animal during this historic drought. Wilson came to the NRCS Office in Paoli to discuss possible assistance. Orange County was designated as a D3 drought county by the U.S. Drought Monitor in mid July of 2012.



The NRCS staff wrote a conservation plan for Wilson recommending two practices to benefit the pasture and forage supply on 189 acres of pastureland. Both of the Access Control Practices: Short-Term Deferment (planned on 135.2 acres) and Long-Term Deferment (planned on 53.8 acres) allow the exclusion of livestock from pastures giving adequate rest to perennial forages to restore plant vigor, build winter plant reserves, accumulate forages for later use, and provide cover and improved conditions for wildlife during the deferment period.

Wilson's conservation plan also included planting 78 acres of a cover crop species mix on the cropped acreage. The forage cover crop mix consisted of turnips, spring oats, annual ryegrass, and radishes which will allow for grazing of the cover crops. The lush fall growth will give the cattle and wildlife an outstanding food source this fall and winter, while also providing erosion control, improving soil organic matter, capturing and/or recycling nutrients, increasing biodiversity, suppressing weeds, managing soil moisture, and reducing soil compaction.



Nearly 400 acres of Wilson's farm have been improved for wildlife habitat, providing food, water and shelter for species such whitetail deer and wild turkey. On a recent visit to the farm by NRCS, Wilson explained, "I don't necessarily have time to hunt, but I sure do enjoy watching someone call in a wild turkey and the strategy it involves."

Farmers like Loran Wilson see the big picture and make a tremendous difference in maintaining critical wildlife habitat and food sources in southern Indiana—especially during times of drought.

